

### ABSTRACT

A method for producing a refolded, inactive form of recombinantly produced NS2/3 protease which comprises the steps of: a) purifying the protease from inclusion bodies in the presence of a chaotropic agent; and b) refolding the purified protease by contacting it with a reducing agent and lauryldiethylamine oxide (LDAO) in the presence of reduced concentration of chaotropic agent or polar additive. The invention further comprises a method for activating this refolded inactive NS2/3 protease by adding an activation detergent. This method produces large amounts of the active NS2/3 protease to allow small molecules and ligands to be screened as potential inhibitors of NS2/3 protease, which may be useful as therapeutic agents against HCV.